# Religion, Tradition & Musical Holy Wars

Lecture 12 | Music in the Classical and Romantic Eras MCGY2612

30 May 2011

Dr David Larkin | Lecturer in Music

THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Caricature of Brahms and Hanslick, *Figaro* (1890)
Source: Dahlhaus 1989: 248

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# MENDELSSOHN, PSALM 22 OP. 78/3 [1/3]

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17 I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.
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20 Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the
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Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me
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22 I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst
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23 Ye that fear the LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of
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24 For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of
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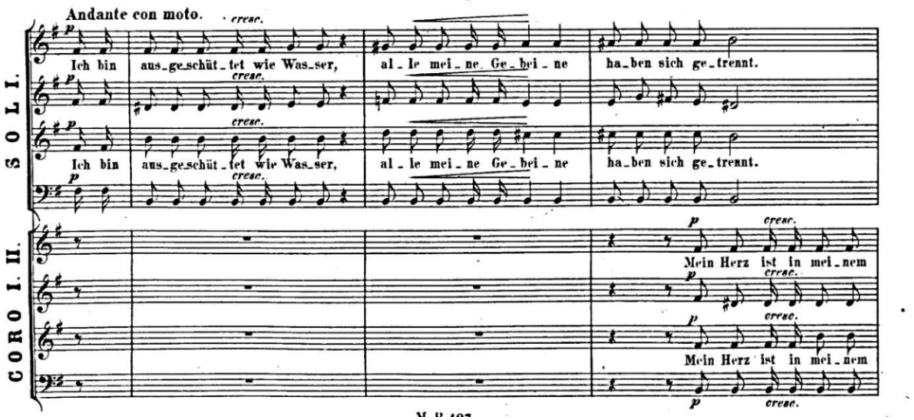
when he cried unto him, he heard.

Mendelssohn (1839)
by James Warren Childe




King James translation

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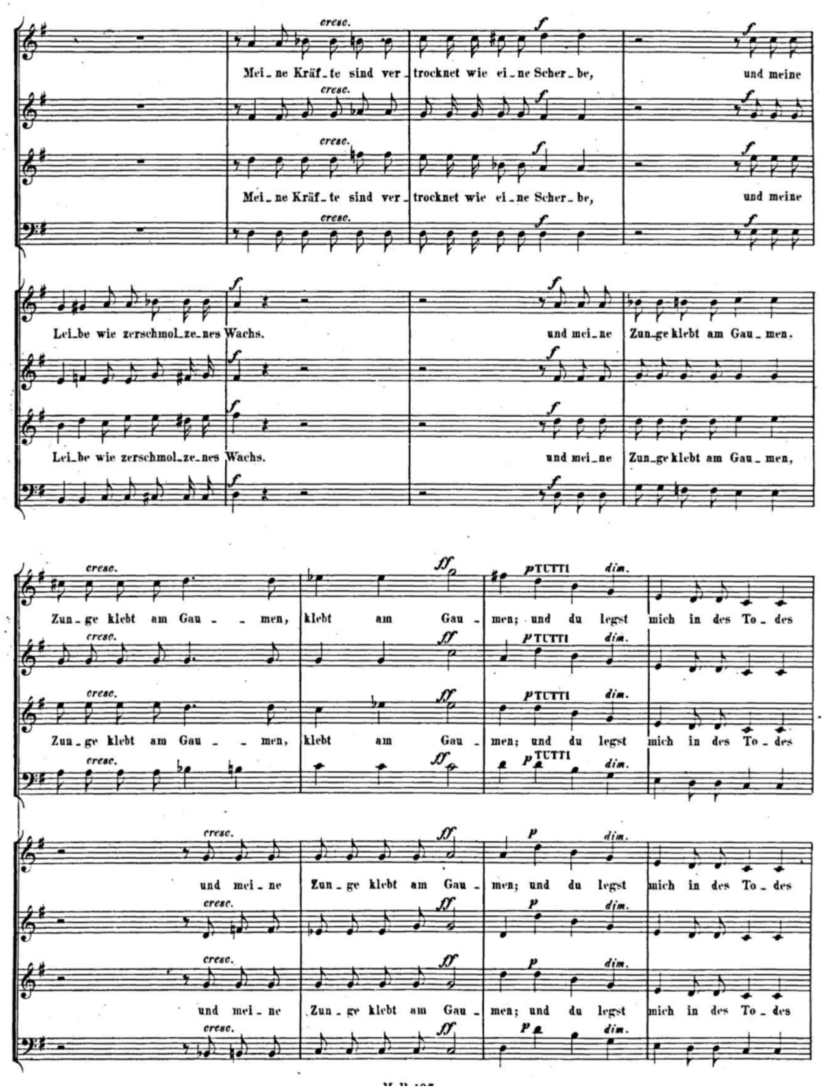

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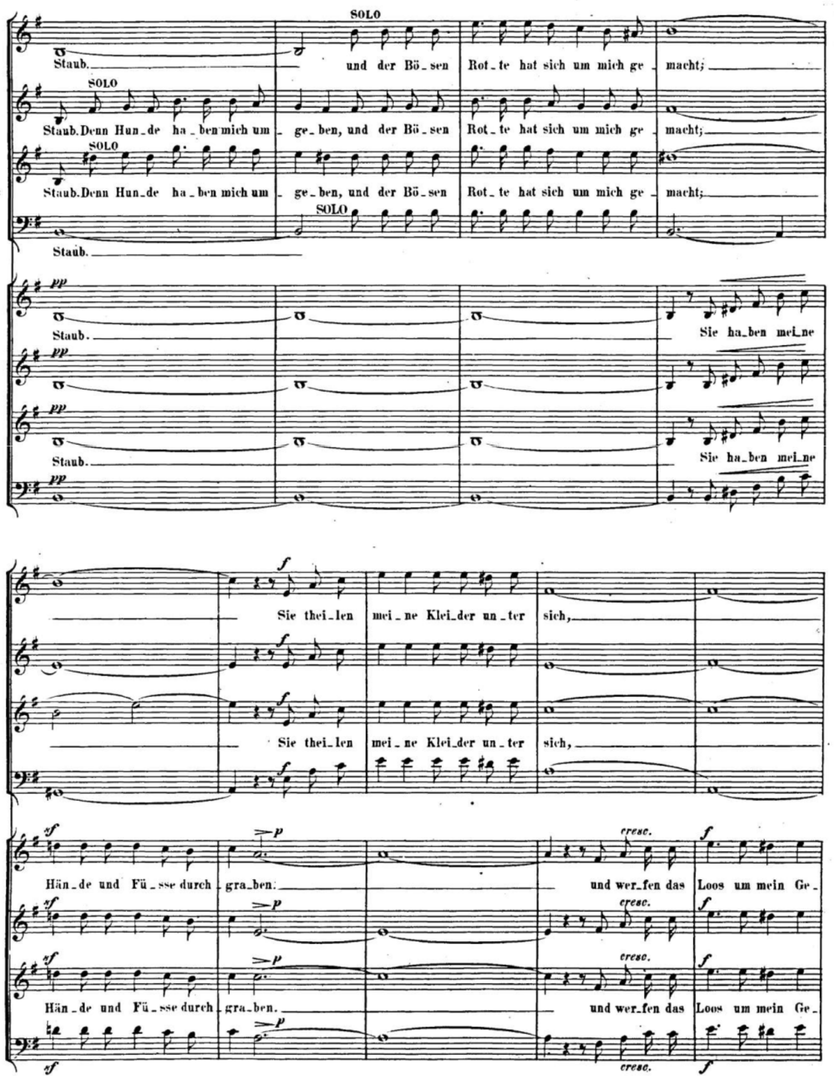

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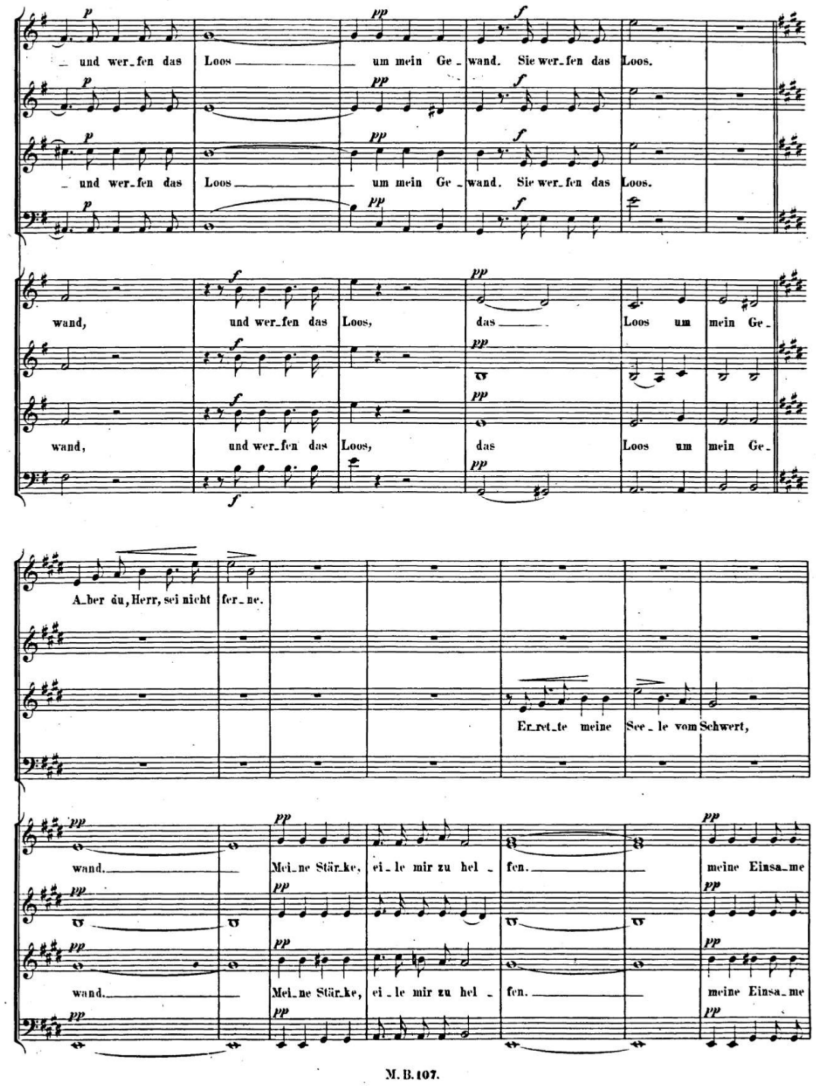

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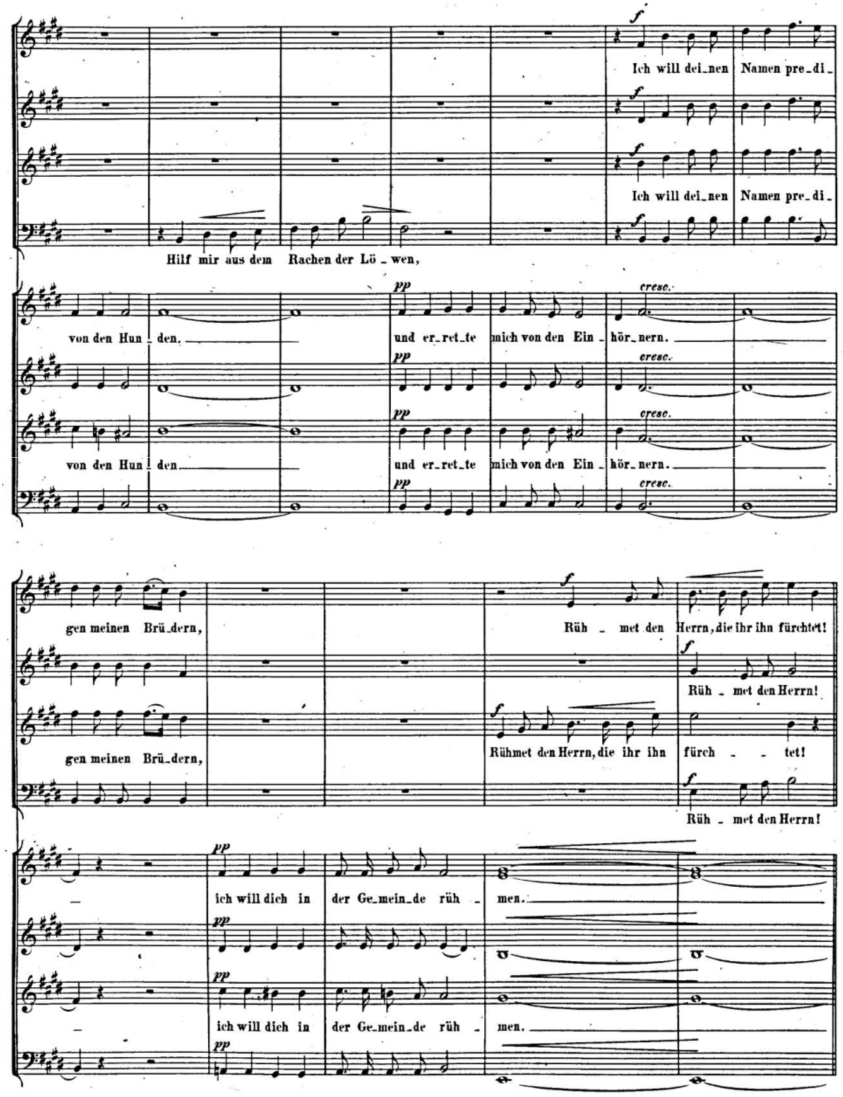


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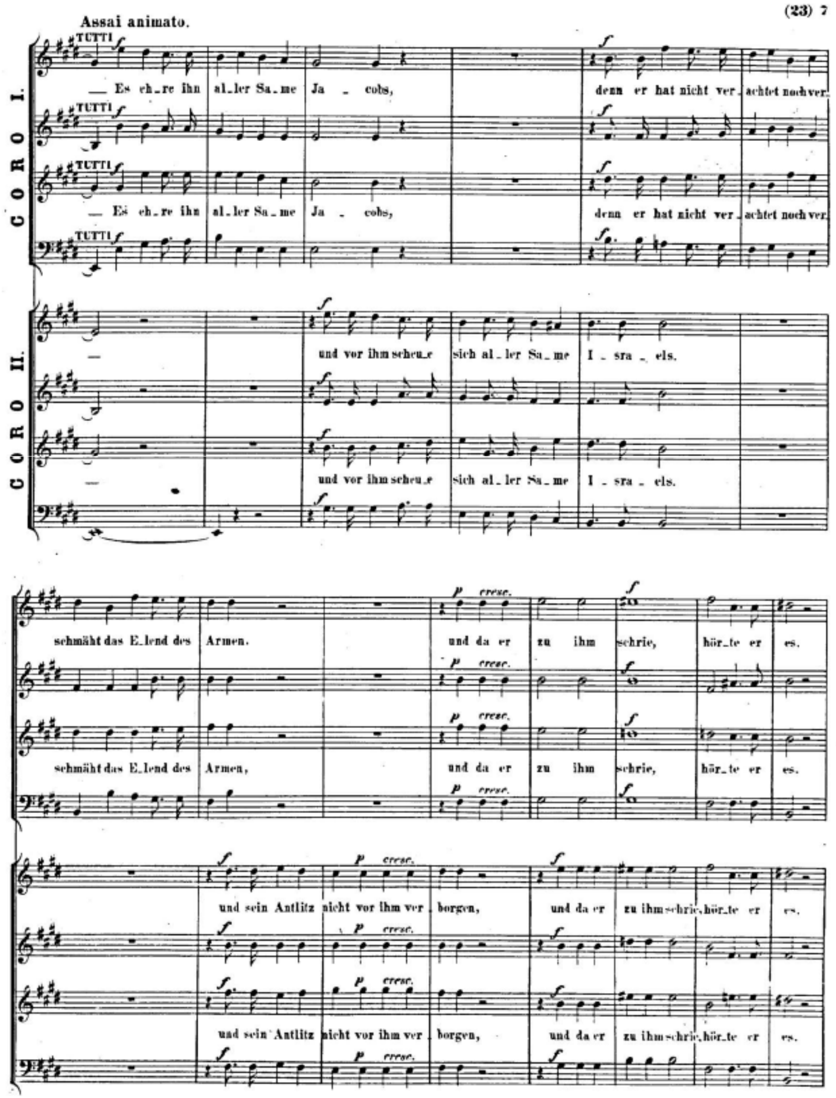
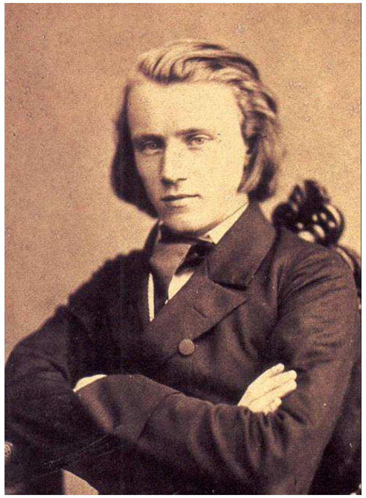


# SCHUMANN, ‘NEUE BAHNEN’ (1853) [1/2]

Article published in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*

- [...] there would and must suddenly appear some day one man who would be singled out to make articulate in an ideal way the highest expression of our time, one man who would bring us mastery, not as a result of a gradual development, but as Minerva, springing fully armed from the head of Cronus. And his come, a young creature over whose cradle graces and heroes stood guard. His name is
- *Johannes Brahms*. […]



Top: Robert Schumann (c. 1850)
Bottom: Johannes Brahms (1853)

# SCHUMANN, 'NEUE BAHNEN' (1853) [2/2]

- There were sonatas – veiled symphonies, rather; lieder, whose poetry one could understand without knowing the words, although a deep vocal melody ran through them all; single piano pieces, in part of a daemonic nature, most attractive in form; then sonatas for violin and piano; string quartets – and every work so distinct from any other that each seemed to flow from a different source. And then it seemed as though, roaring along as a river, he united them all as in a waterfall, bearing aloft a peaceful rainbow above the plunging waters below, surrounded at the shore by playful butterflies and borne along by the calls of nightingales.
- Later, if he will wave with his magic wand to where massed forces, in the chorus and orchestra, lend their strength, there lie before us still more wondrous glimpses into the secrets of the spirit world. May the highest genius strengthen him for what expectation warrants, for there is also latent in him another genius – that of modesty. His comrades greet him on his first entrance into the world, where there awaits him wounds, perhaps, but also palms and laurels; we welcome him as a valiant warrior.'

Weiss & Taruskin 1984: 362-3

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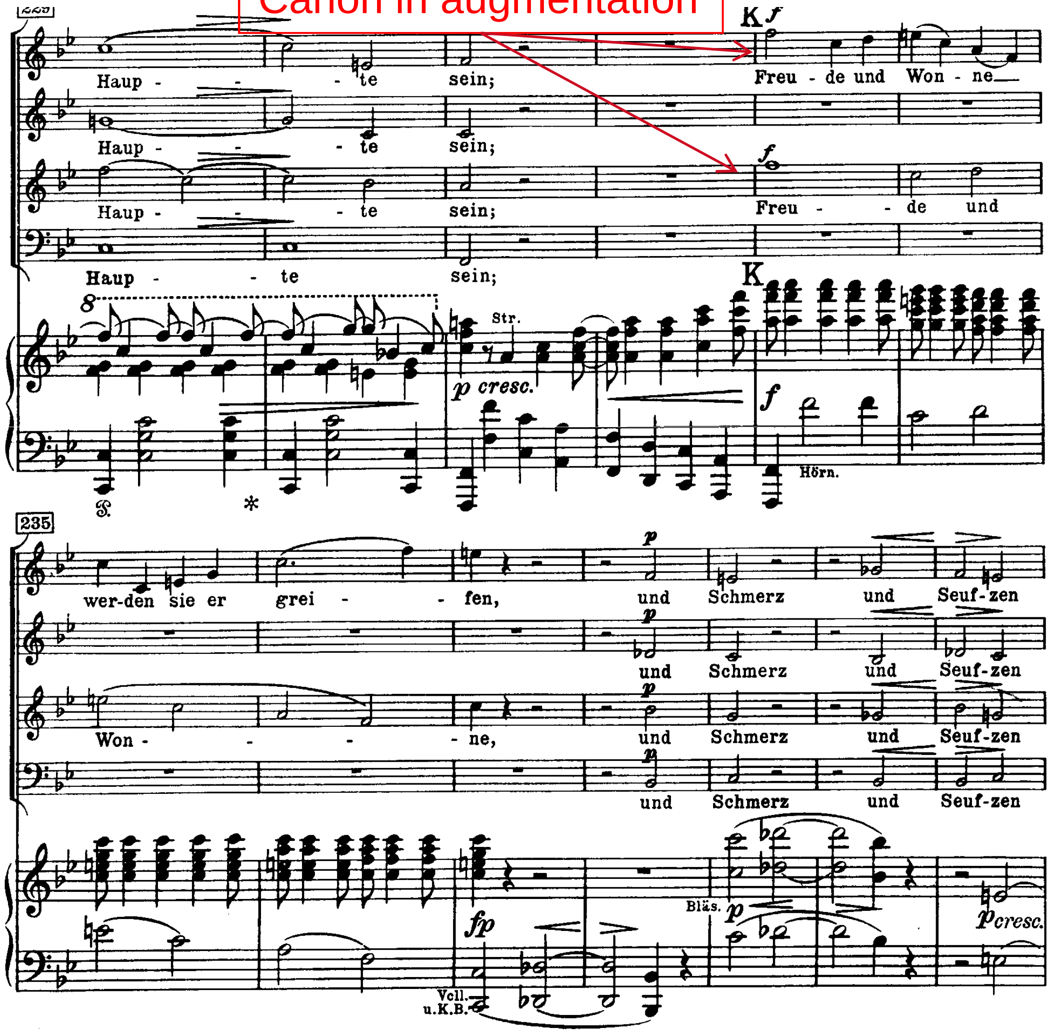
# BRAHMS, *EIN DEUTSCHES REQUIEM* [1/4]

Canon in augmentation

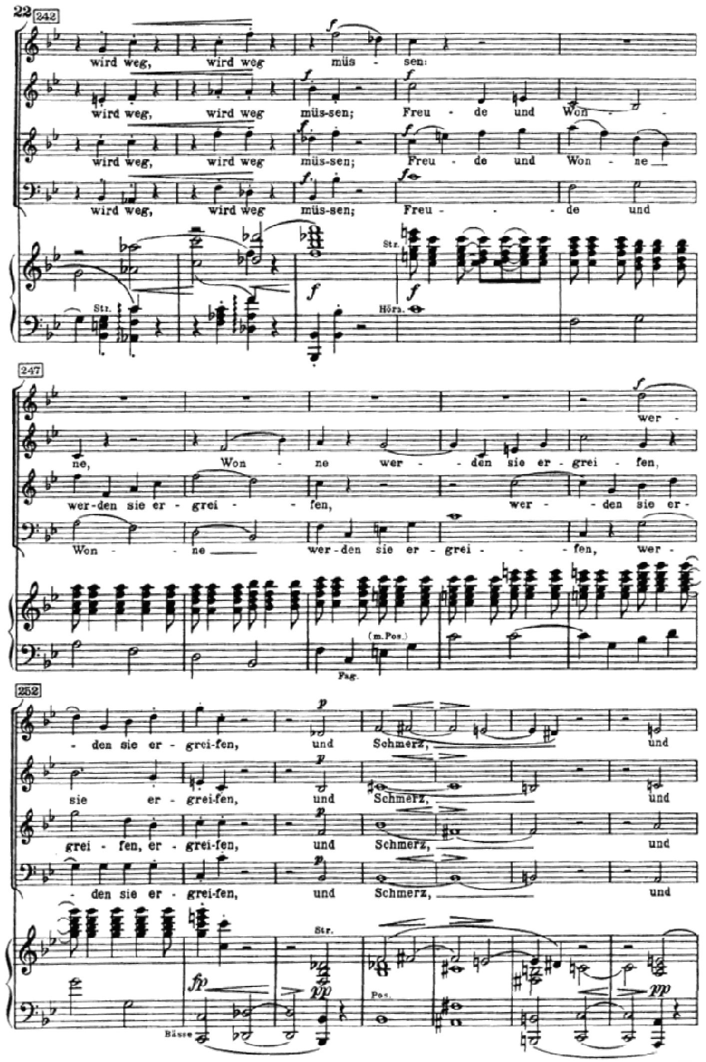



› They shall receive joy and delight;

› And sorrow and sighing...

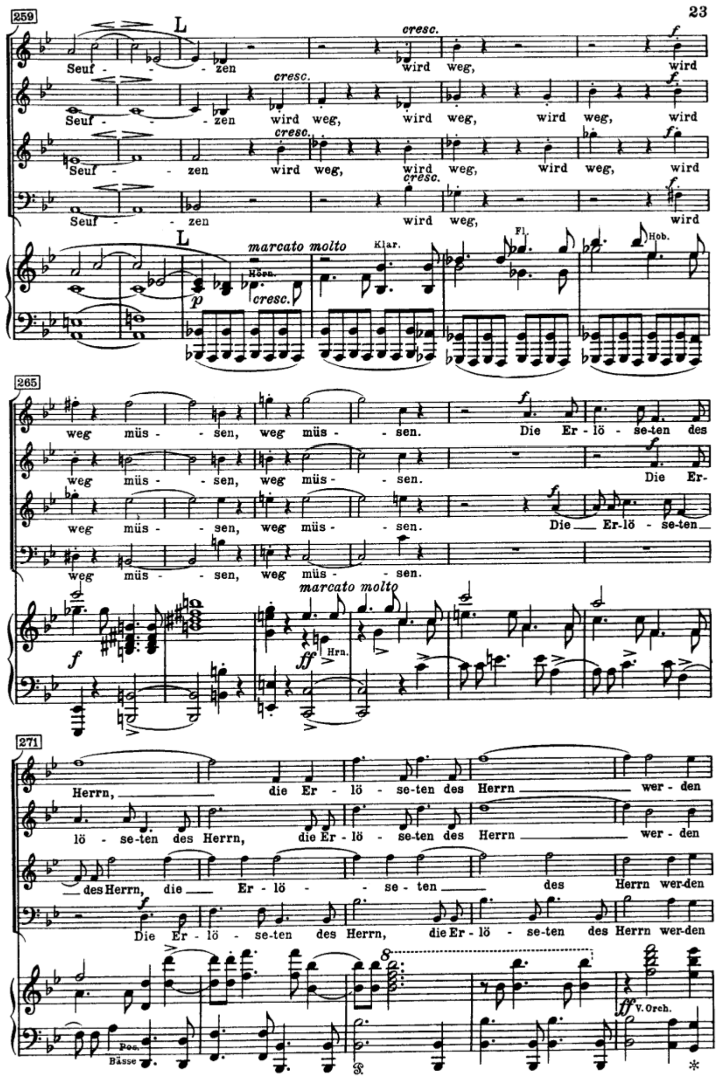
Excerpt from Movt. II: ‘Denn alles Fleisch es ist wie Gras’

# BRAHMS, *EIN DEUTSCHES REQUIEM* [2/4]



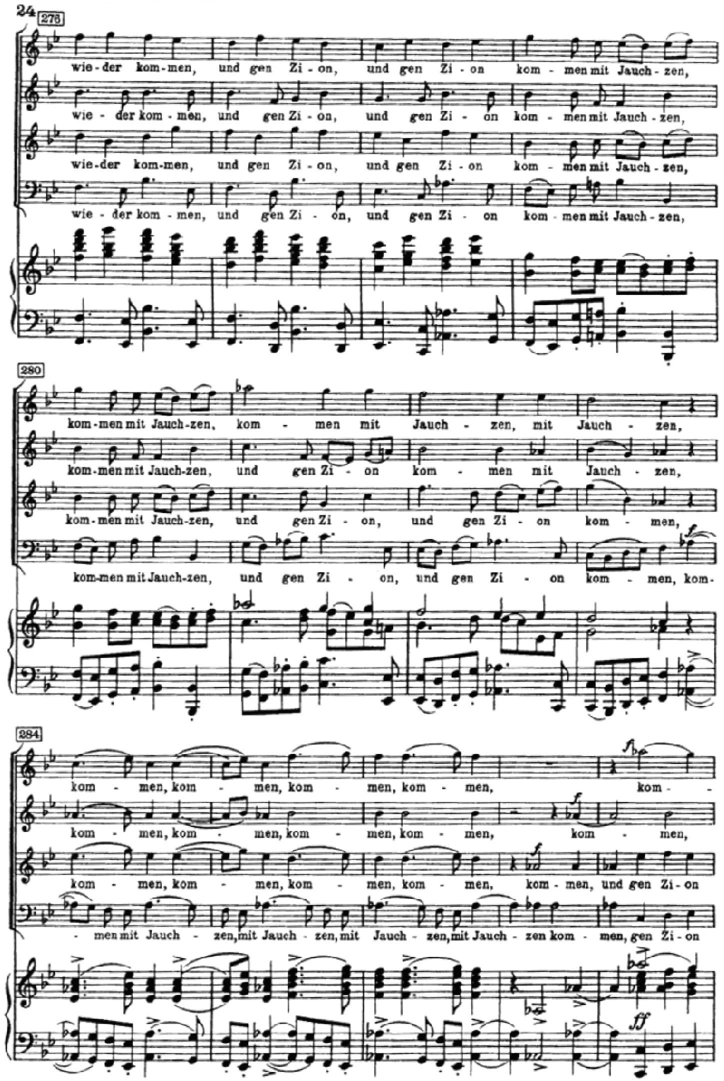

› ... shall have to give way

# BRAHMS, *EIN DEUTSCHES REQUIEM* [3/4]

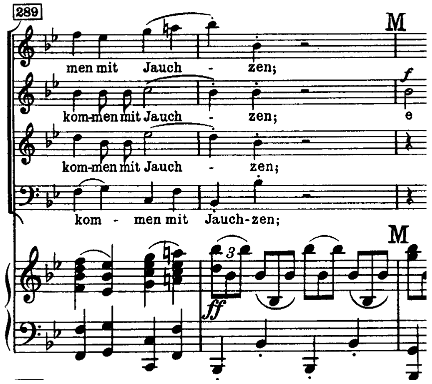



- Those redeemed by the Lord...

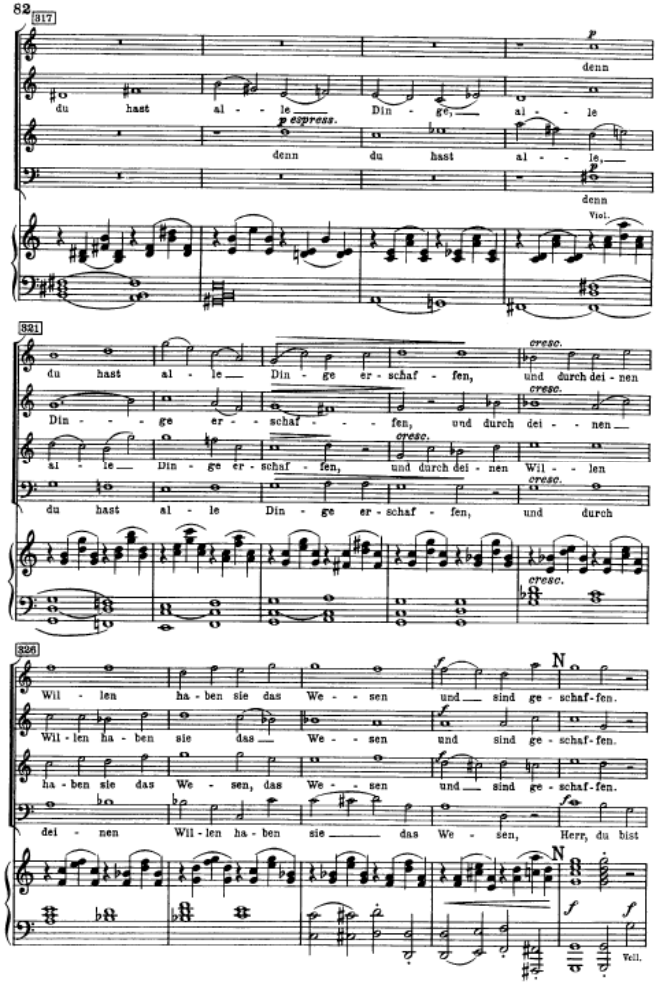
# BRAHMS, *EIN DEUTSCHES REQUIEM* [4/4]

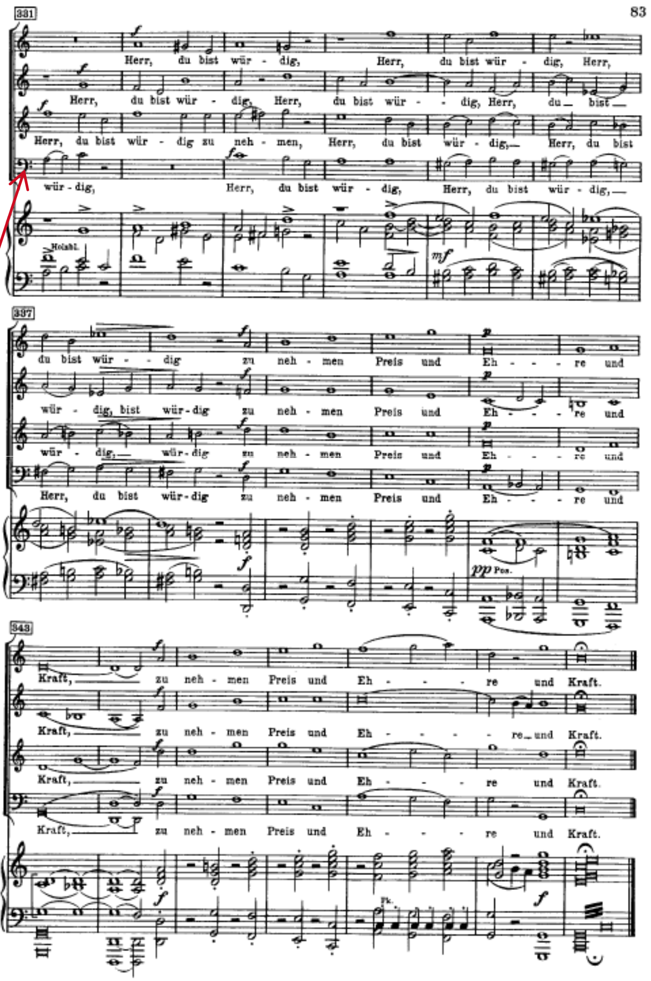



› ... will come again rejoicing to Zion



# STILE ANTICO IN BRAHMS

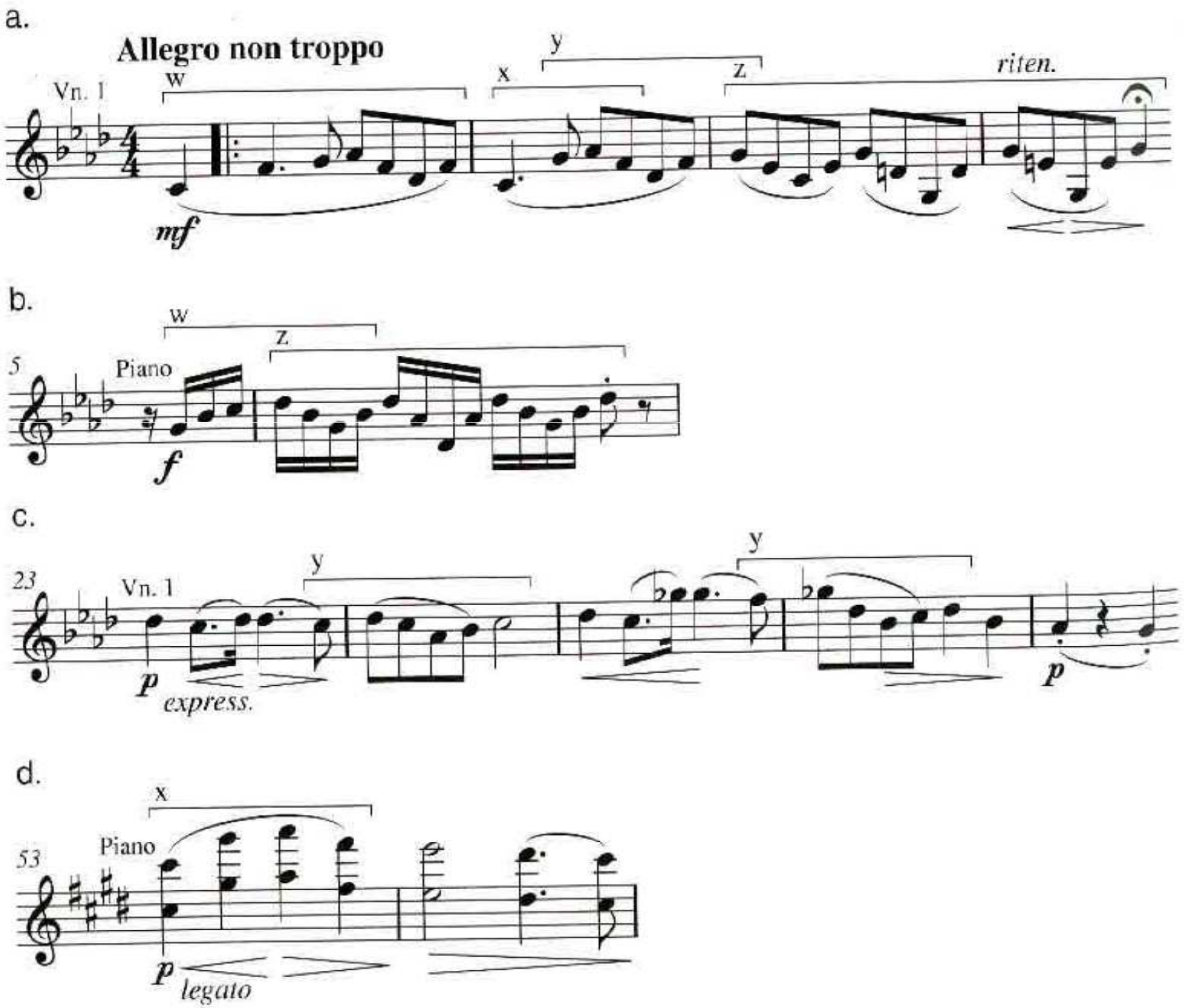



Palestrina-influenced writing: white notes, stretto (=overlapping) imitative entries

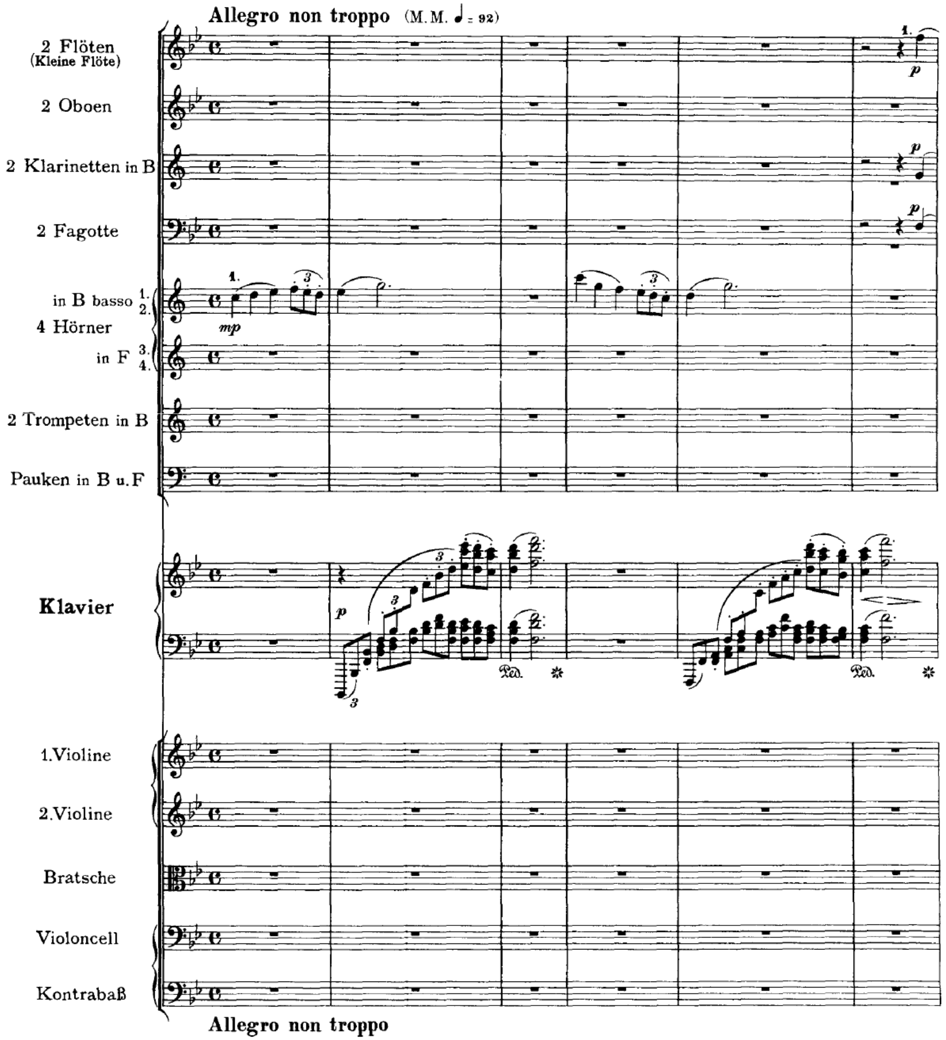
Ending of Movt. VI: ‘Denn wir haben hie keine bleibende Statt’

# BRAHMS AND DEVELOPING VARIATION




Developing variation in Piano Quintet Op. 34 as analysed by Burkholder (2010: 732)

# BRAHMS, PIANO CONCERTO NO. 2/I



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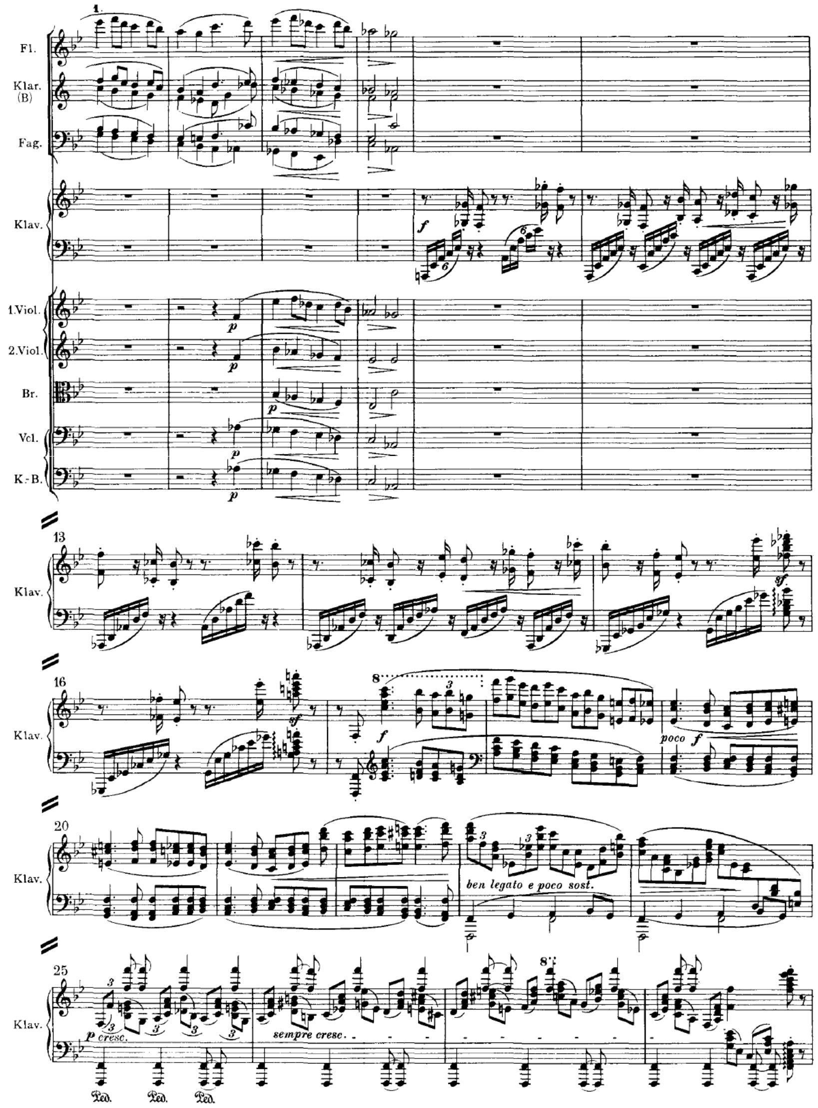


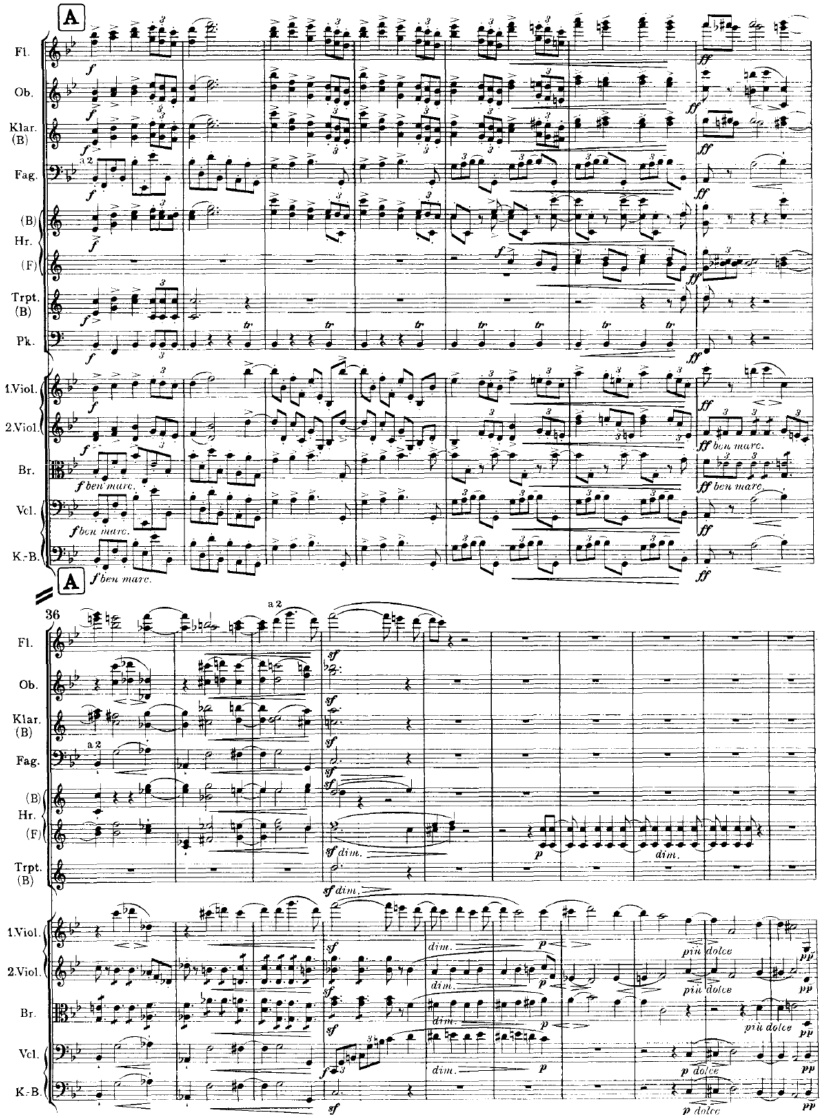

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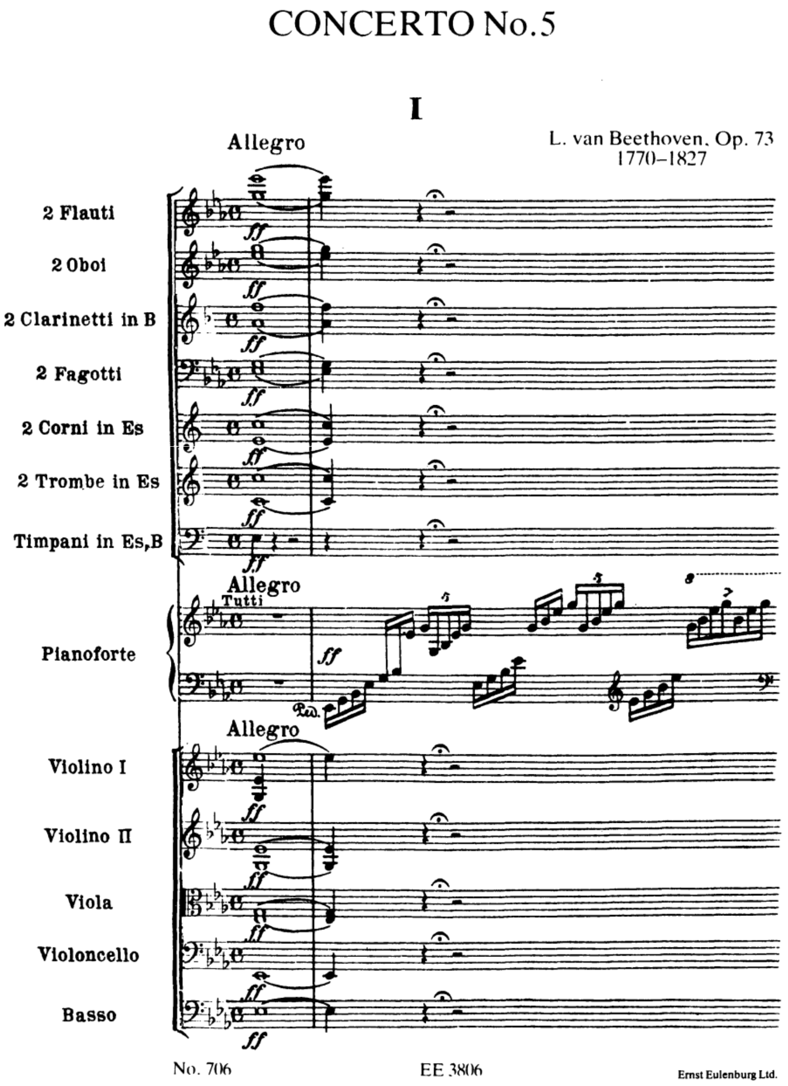
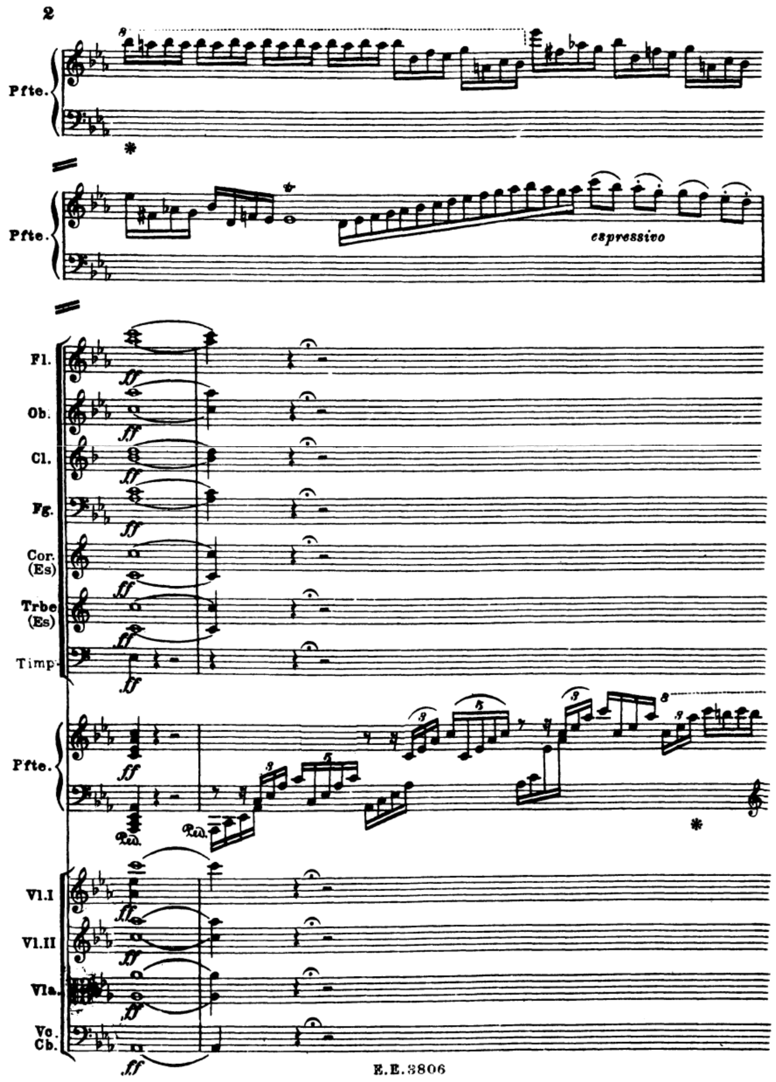
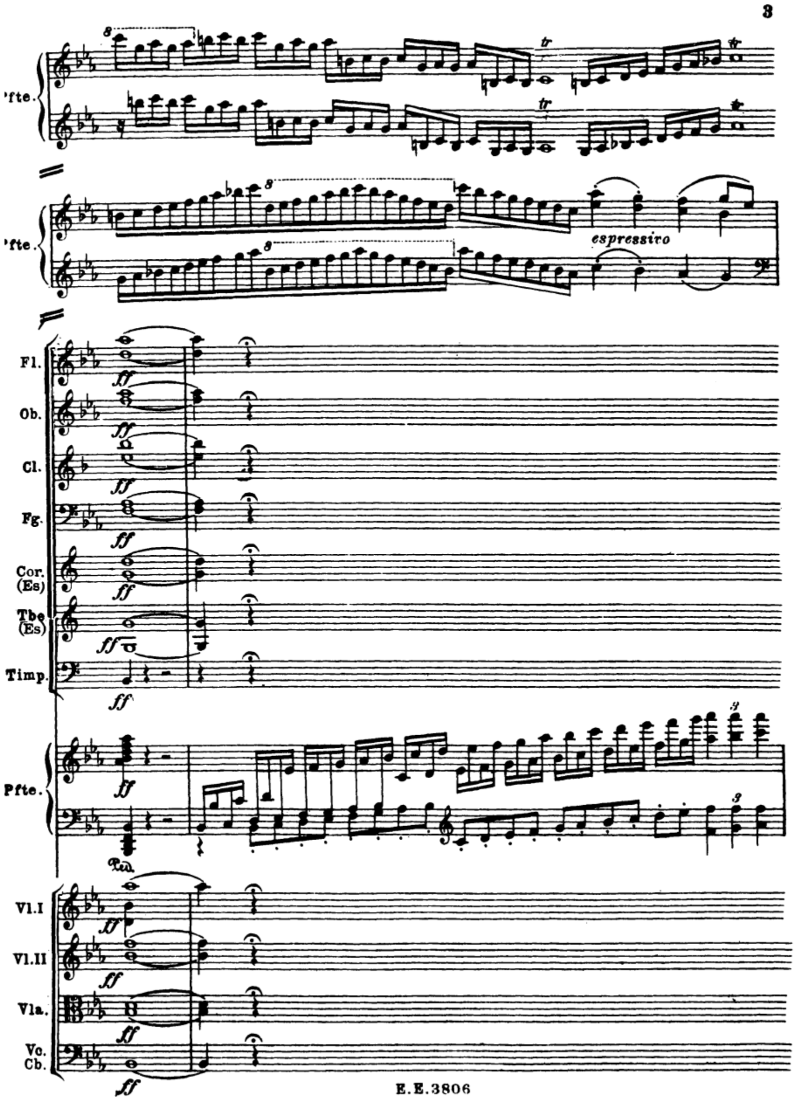
# PIANO CONCERTO NO. 5 ‘EMPEROR’, I

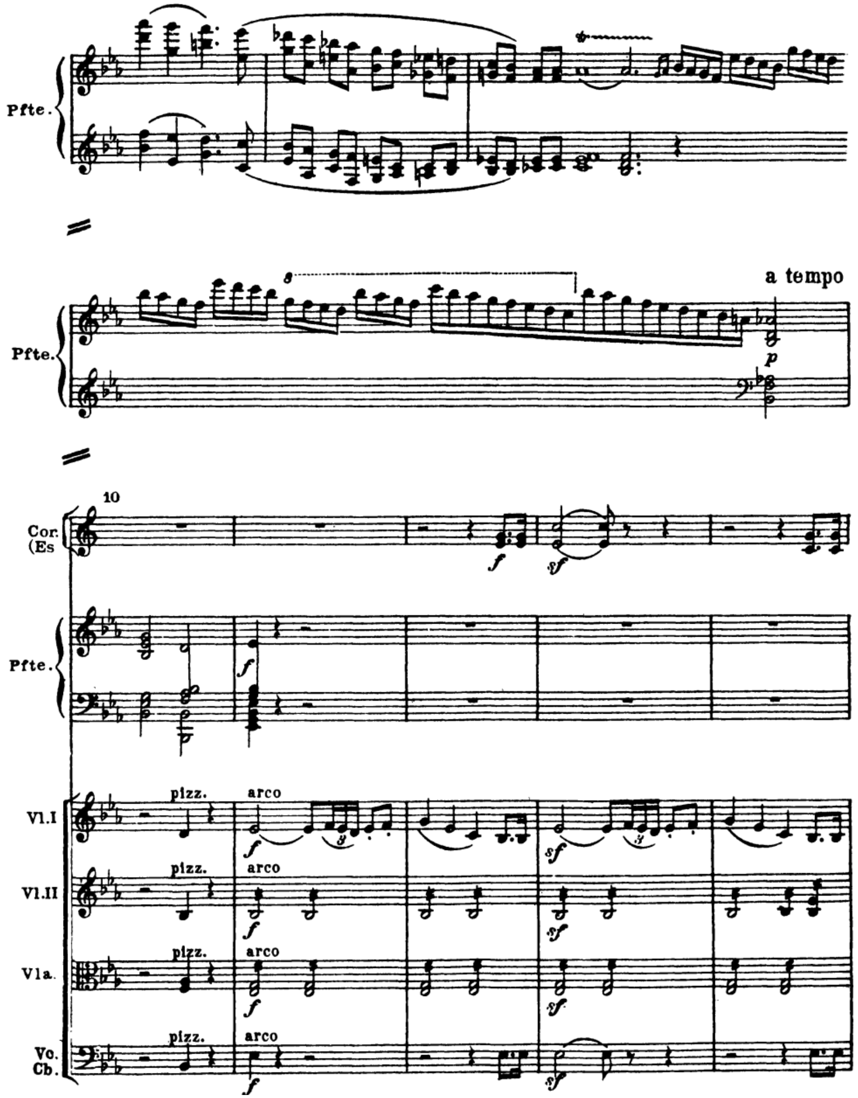



Obvious model for the opening of Brahms Piano Concerto no. 2

# PIANO CONCERTO NO. 5 ‘EMPEROR’, I



# SYMPHONIC PRESSURES

When the German speaks of symphonies, he means Beethoven; the two names are for him one and indivisible - his joy, his pride. As Italy has its Naples, France its Revolution, England its Navy, etc., so the Germans have their Beethoven symphonies. The German forgets in his Beethoven that he has no school of painting; with Beethoven he imagines that he has reversed the fortunes of the battles that he lost to Napoleon; he even dares to place him on the same level with Shakespeare.

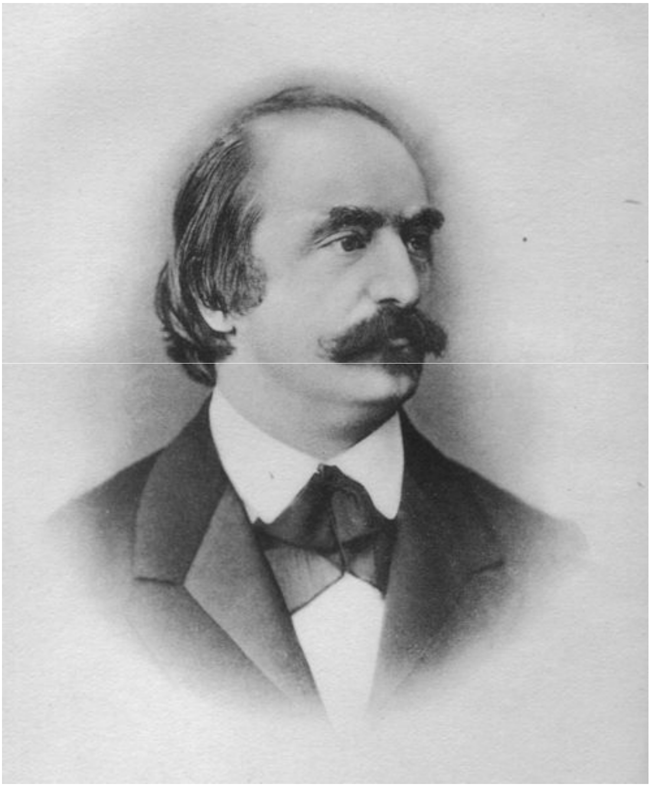
Robert Schumann, 1839

‘I shall never write a symphony. You have no idea how it feels to one of us when he continually hears behind him such a giant [Beethoven].’

Johannes Brahms to Hermann Levi, Oct. 1871

# HANSLICK ON BRAHMS SYMPHONY NO. 1 [1/2]

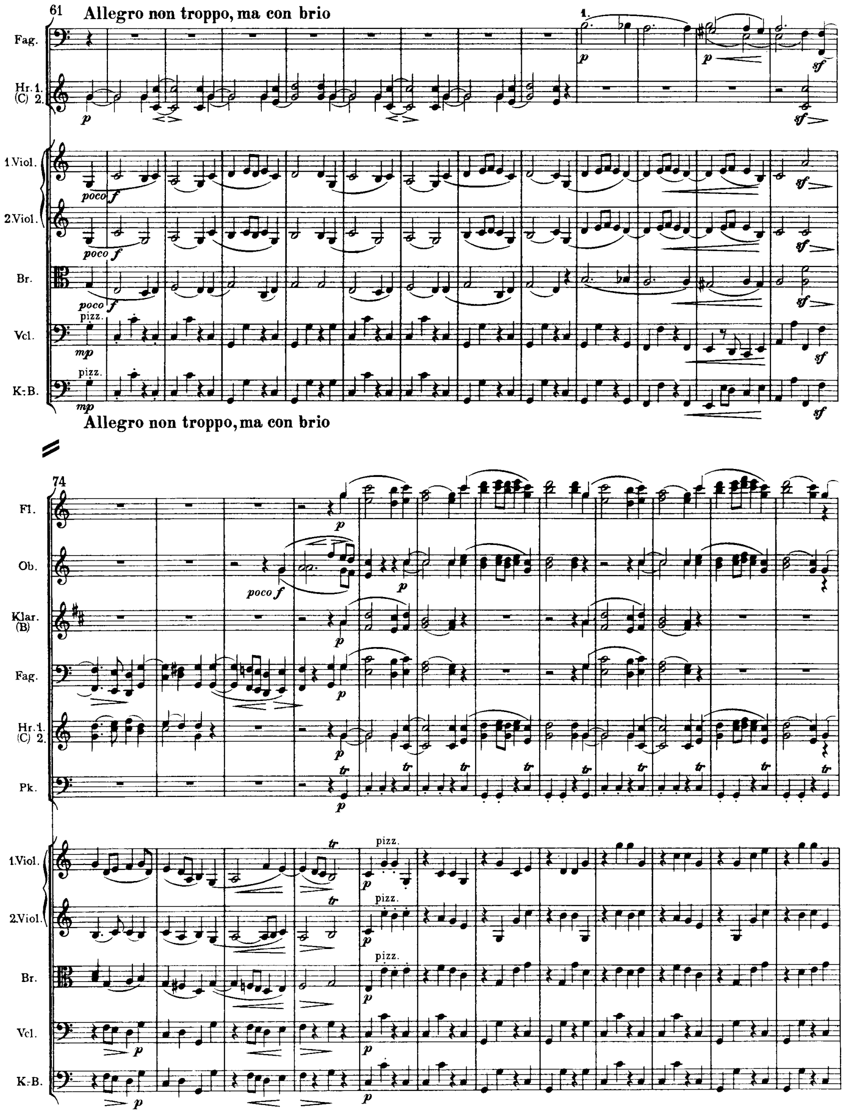
[Brahms made many attempts at a symphony before this but would not publish anything of which he wasn't fully satisfied.] He used to reply he had too much respect for his forerunners, and that one cannot 'fool around' these days with a symphony. This severity with himself, this care for details is evident in the admirable workmanship of the new symphony. The listener may, indeed, find it rather too evident. He may miss, in all the astonishing contrapuntal art, the immediate communicative effect. And he will not be wholly wrong. The new symphony is so earnest and complex, so utterly unconcerned with common effects, that it hardly lends itself to quick understanding. This circumstance, although not necessarily a fault, is a misfortune, at least for the first impression. Subsequent repetitions will make it good.

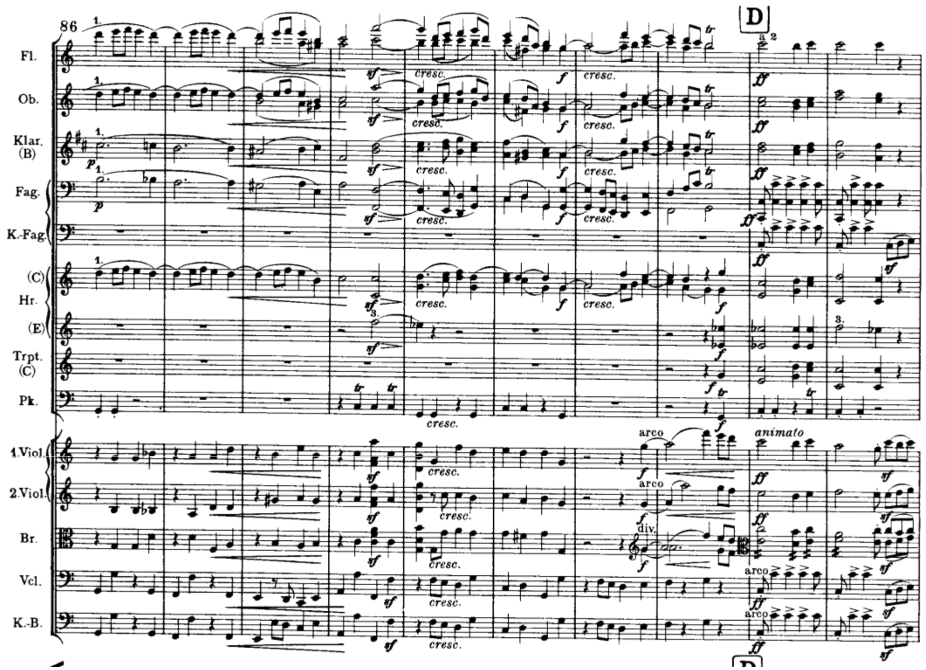


Eduard Hanslick

Weiss & Taruskin 1984: 403-404

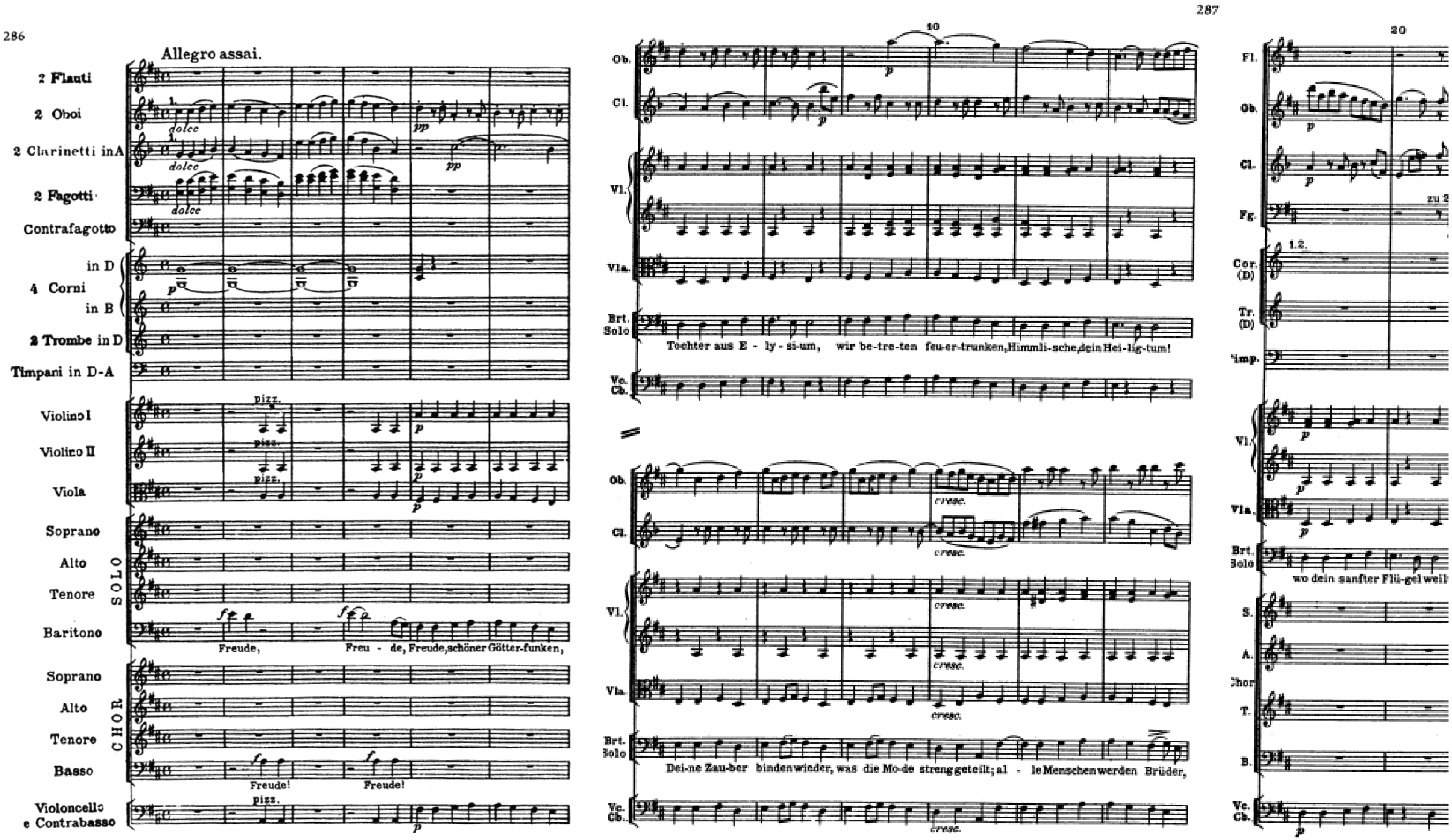
# BRAHMS, SYMPHONY NO. 1/IV




As Brahms said, ‘Every ass can hear the resemblance to… [see next Slide]

# ...AND ITS BEETHOVENIAN PRECURSOR




Beethoven, Symphony no. 9/IV

# HANSLICK ON BRAHMS SYMPHONY NO. 1 [2/2]

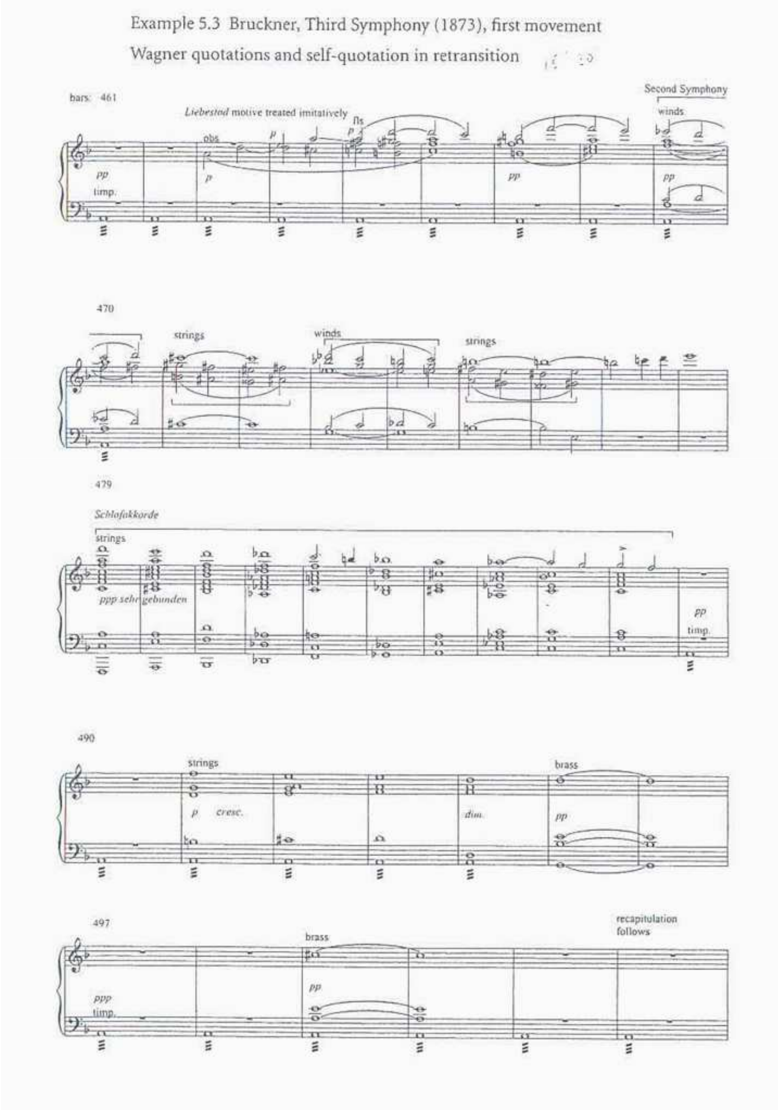
- The fourth movement begins most significantly with an Adagio in C minor; from darkening clouds the song of the woodland horn rises clear and sweet above the tremolo of the violins. All hearts tremble with the fiddles in anticipation. The entrance of the Allegro with its simple, beautiful theme, reminiscent of the 'Ode to Joy' in the Ninth Symphony, is overpowering as it rises onward and upward, right to the end. (404)
- No composer has come so close to the style of the late Beethoven as Brahms in this finale. […] neither Mendelssohn or Schumann approaches the late Beethoven. Beethoven's third period is not a prerequisite for their symphonies. Mendelssohn and Schumann incline rather to the point of view of Haydn's and Mozart's musical philosophy – and carry it further. Brahms's quartets and the symphony, on the other hand, could not have been were it not for Beethoven's last period. (404)
- Thus Brahms recalls Beethoven's symphonic style not only in his individually spiritual and suprasensual expression, the beautiful breadth of his melodies, the daring and originality of his modulations, and his sense of polyphonic structure, but also – and above all – in the manly and noble seriousness of the whole. […] Brahms seems to favour too one-sidedly the great and the serious, the difficult and the complex, and at the expense of sensuous beauty. (405)

Weiss & Taruskin 1984: 404-405

# ‘O MEISTER, ICH BETE DICH AN!’

Bruckner & Wagner 1873

Bruckner was as devoted to Wagner as he was to Beethoven, even though he wrote symphonies rather than music dramas (see Wagnerian quotations opposite)



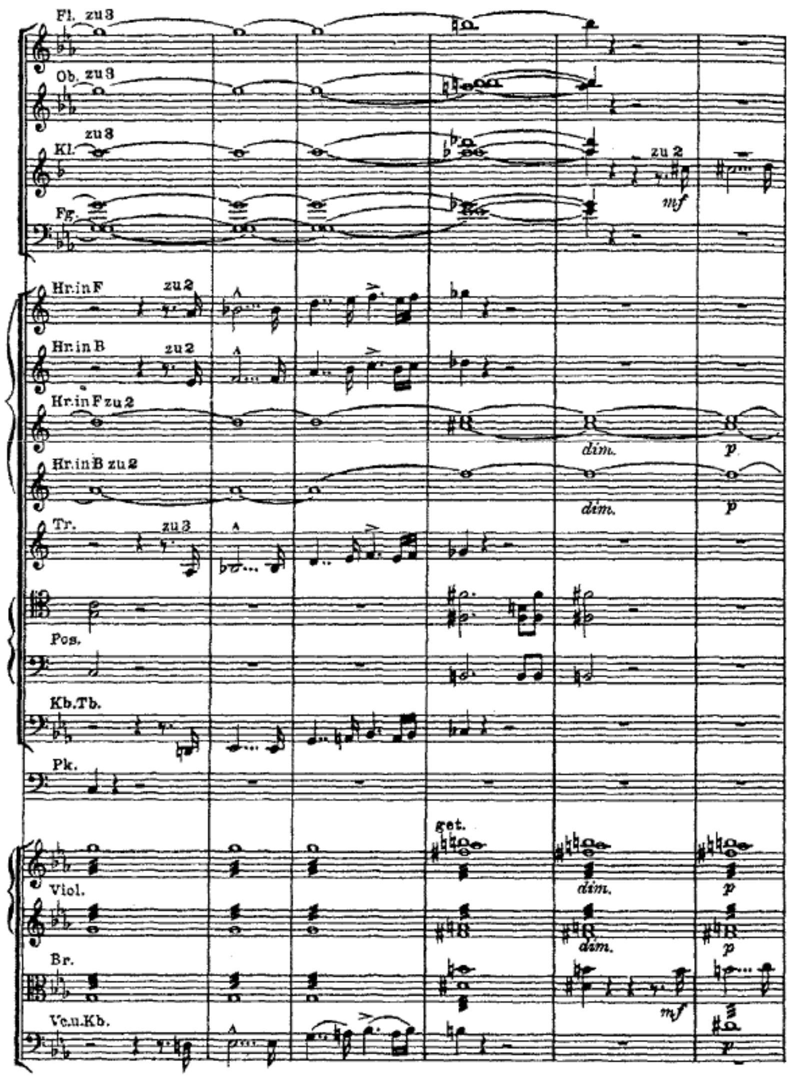

Horton, *Bruckner’s Symphonies*: 187

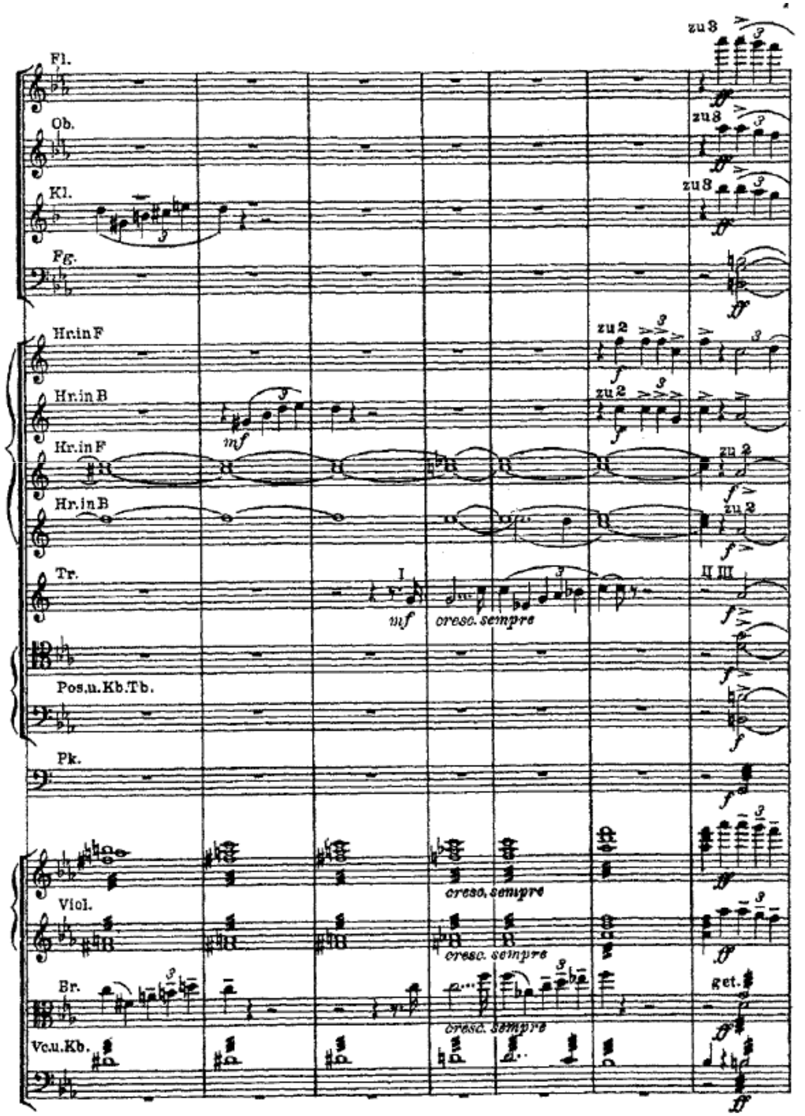
# HANSLICK ON BRUCKNER'S WAGNERISM

- The Philharmonic Orchestra devoted its entire concert to a new symphony by Bruckner.  It is the eighth in the series and similar to its predecessors in form and mood.  I found this newest one, as I have found the other Bruckner symphonies, interesting in detail but strange as a whole and even repugnant.  The nature of the work consists – to put it briefly – in applying Wagner's dramatic style to the symphony.
- Not only does Bruckner fall continually into Wagnerian devices, effects, and reminiscences; he seems even to have accepted certain Wagnerian pieces as models for symphonic construction, as, for example, the Prelude to *Tristan and Isolde*.  Bruckner begins with a short chromatic motive, repeats it over and over again, higher and higher in the scale and on into infinity, augments it, diminishes it, offers it in contrary motion and so on, until the listener is simply crushed under the sheer weight and monotony of this interminable lamentation.  Alongside these upward surging lamentations we have the subsiding lamentation (after the model of the *Tannhäuser* Overture). Wagnerian orchestral effects are met on every hand, such as the tremolos of the violins divisi in the highest position, harp arpeggios over muffled chords in the trombones, and, added to all that, the newest achievements of the Siegfried tubas.

Review (1892), translated in Henry Pleasants, *Vienna's Golden Years of Music* (London: Gollancz, 1951):

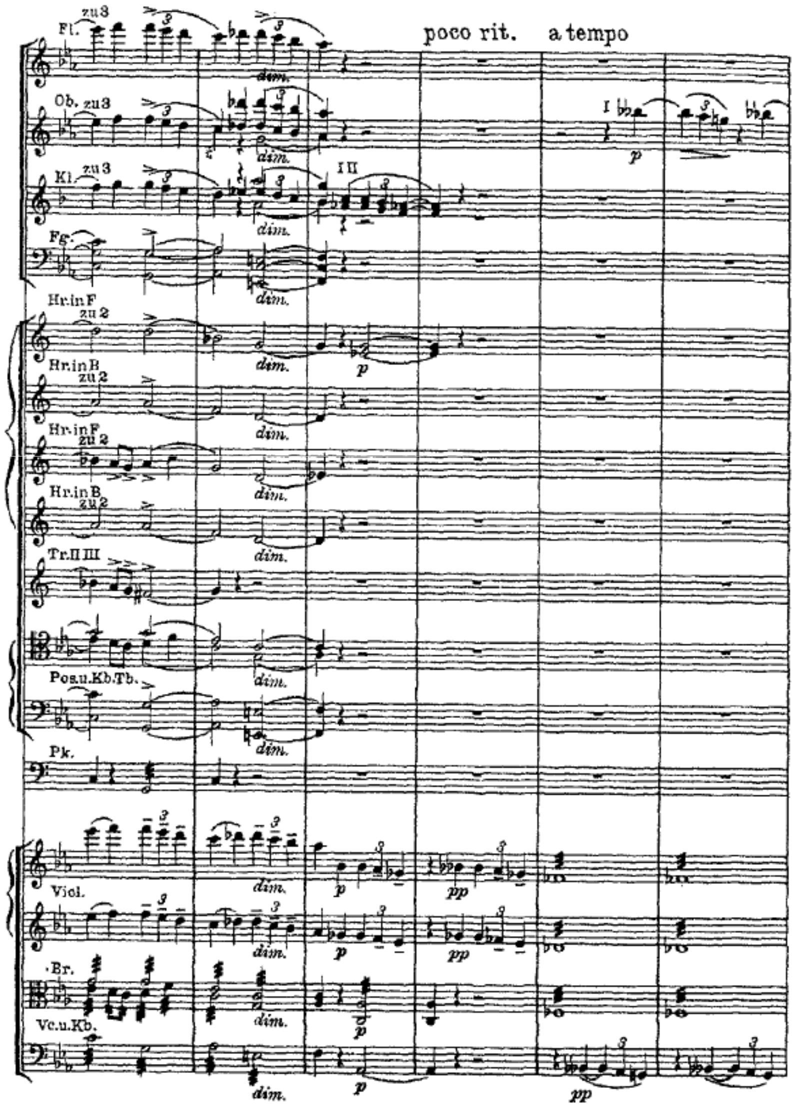
# BRUCKNER THE WAGNERIAN? [1/4]

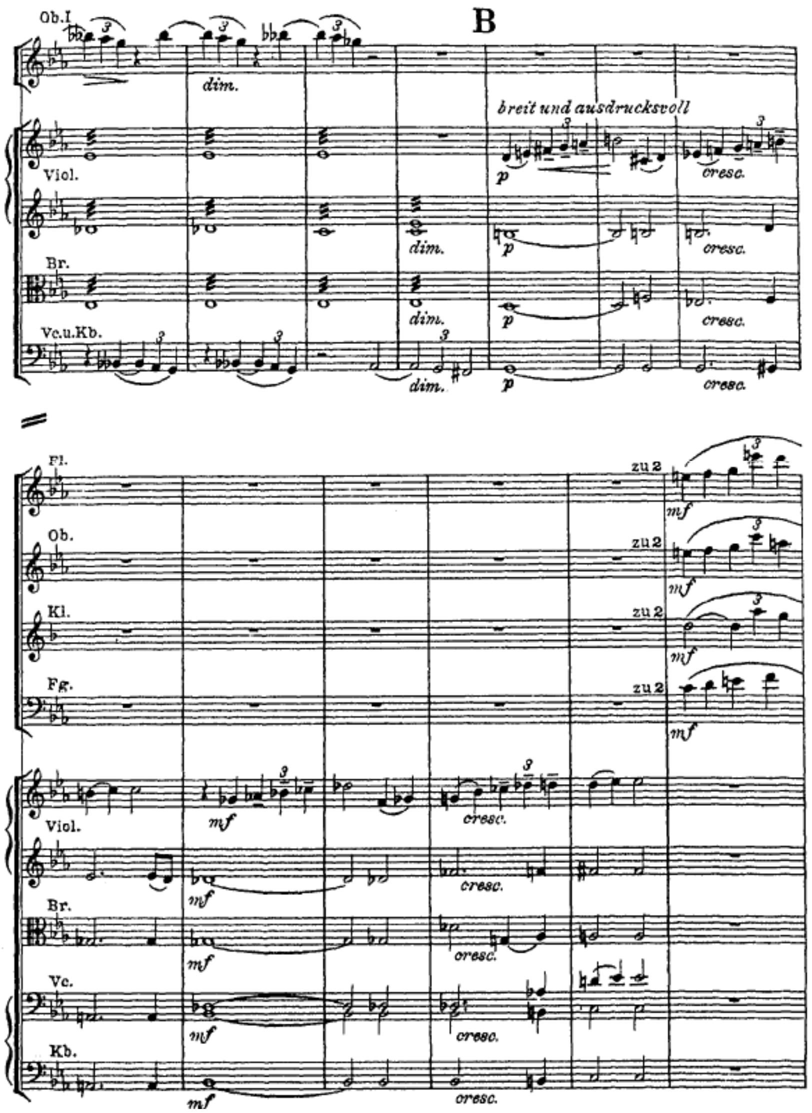


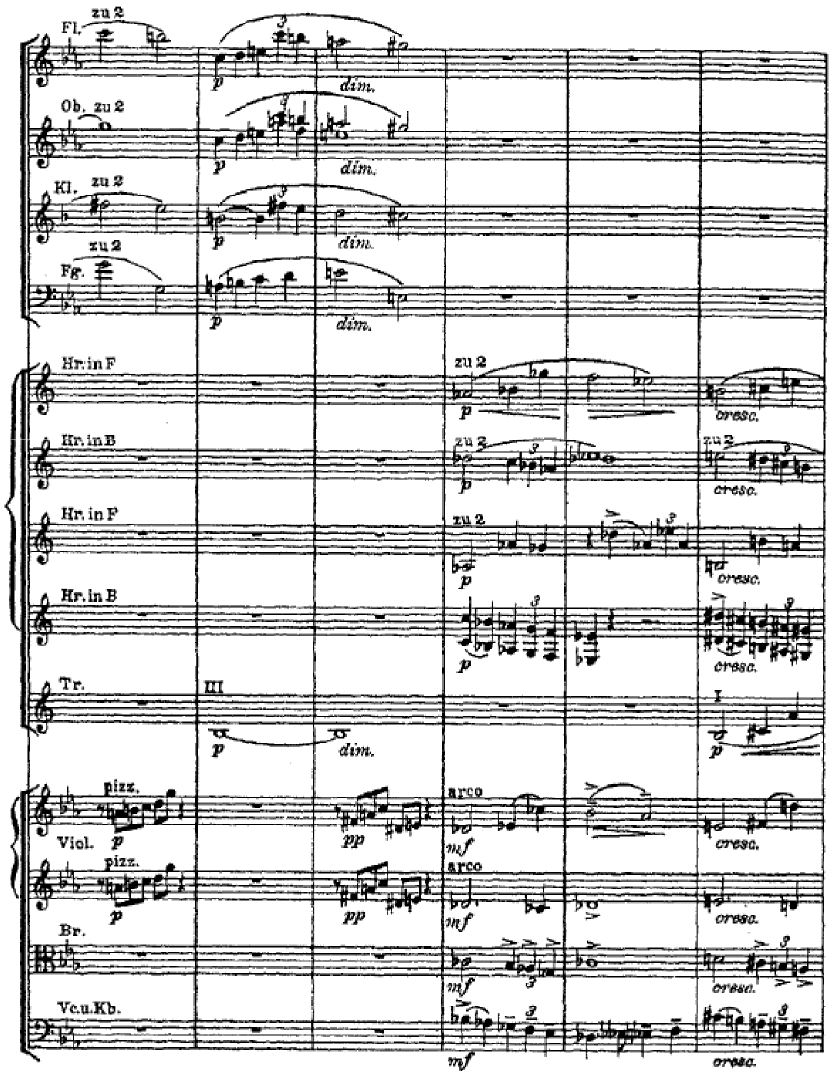

Bruckner, Symphony no. 8 (1st version, 1887), I excerpt

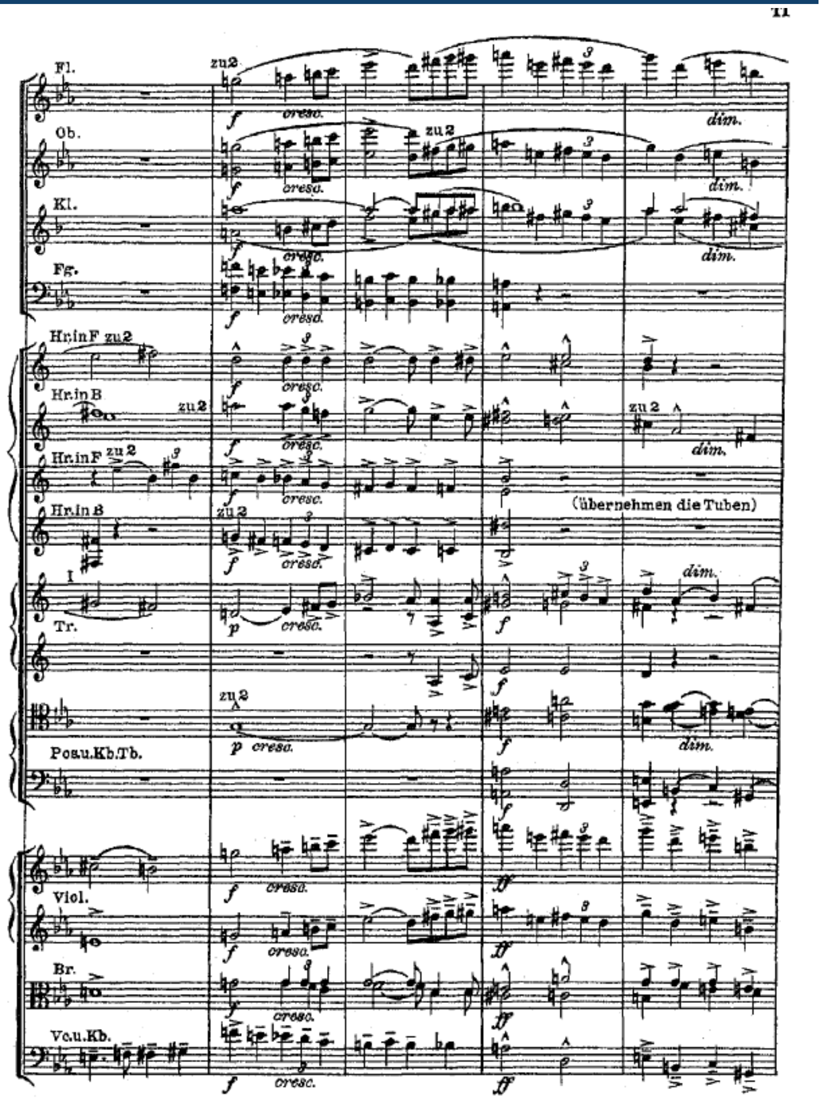
# BRUCKNER THE WAGNERIAN? [2/4]



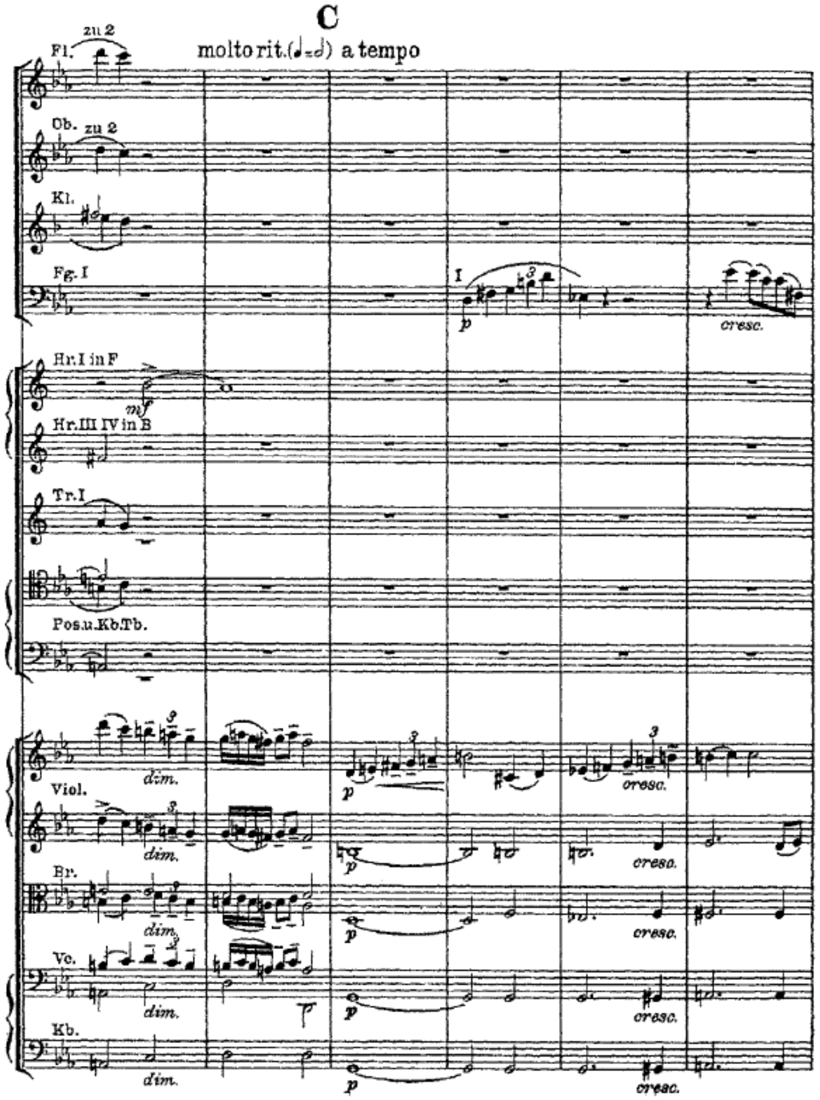



# BRUCKNER THE WAGNERIAN? [3/4]



# BRUCKNER THE WAGNERIAN? [4/4]



# HANSLICK ON BRUCKNER’S COUNTERPOINT

- Also characteristic of Bruckner’s newest symphony is the immediate juxtaposition of dry schoolroom counterpoint with unbounded exaltation.  Thus, tossed about between intoxication and desolation, we arrive at no definite impression and enjoy no artistic pleasure.  Everything flows, without clarity and without order, willy-nilly into dismal long-windedness.  In each of the four movements, and most frequently in the first and third, there are interesting passages and flashes of genius – if only all the rest were not there!  It is not out of the question that the future belongs to this muddled hangover style – which is no reason to regard the future with envy.  For the time being, however, one would prefer that symphonic and chamber music remain undefiled by a style only relatively justified as an illustrative device for certain dramatic situations.

- **Note:** Besides being a journalist, Hanslick was the author of one of the most controversial and influential music treatises of the nineteenth century, *On the musically beautiful* (1854). In it, he expressed the view that ‘the content of music is tonally moving forms’, an argument for music’s autonomy aside from consideration of how it might move us, relate to other arts, etc.

Review (1892), translated in Henry Pleasants, *Vienna’s Golden Years of Music* (London: Gollancz, 1951):

# BRUCKNER THE BEETHOVENIAN DISCIPLE

› ‘I think, if Beethoven were still alive today, and I went to him, showed him my Seventh Symphony and said to him, “Don’t you think, Herr von Beethoven, that the Seventh isn’t as bad as certain people make it out to be – those people who make an example of it and portray me as an idiot” – then, maybe, Beethoven might take me by the hand and say, “My dear Bruckner, don’t bother yourself about it. It was no better for me, and the same gentlemen who use me as a stick to beat you with still don’t really understand my last quartets, however much they may pretend to.” Then I might go on and say, “Please excuse me Herr von Beethoven, if I’ve gone beyond you…” (Bruckner was referring to his use of form!) “but I’ve always said that a true artist can work out his own form and then stick to it.”’

Quoted in Julian Horton, *Bruckner’s Symphonies: Analysis, Reception and Cultural Politics* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004): 173-4

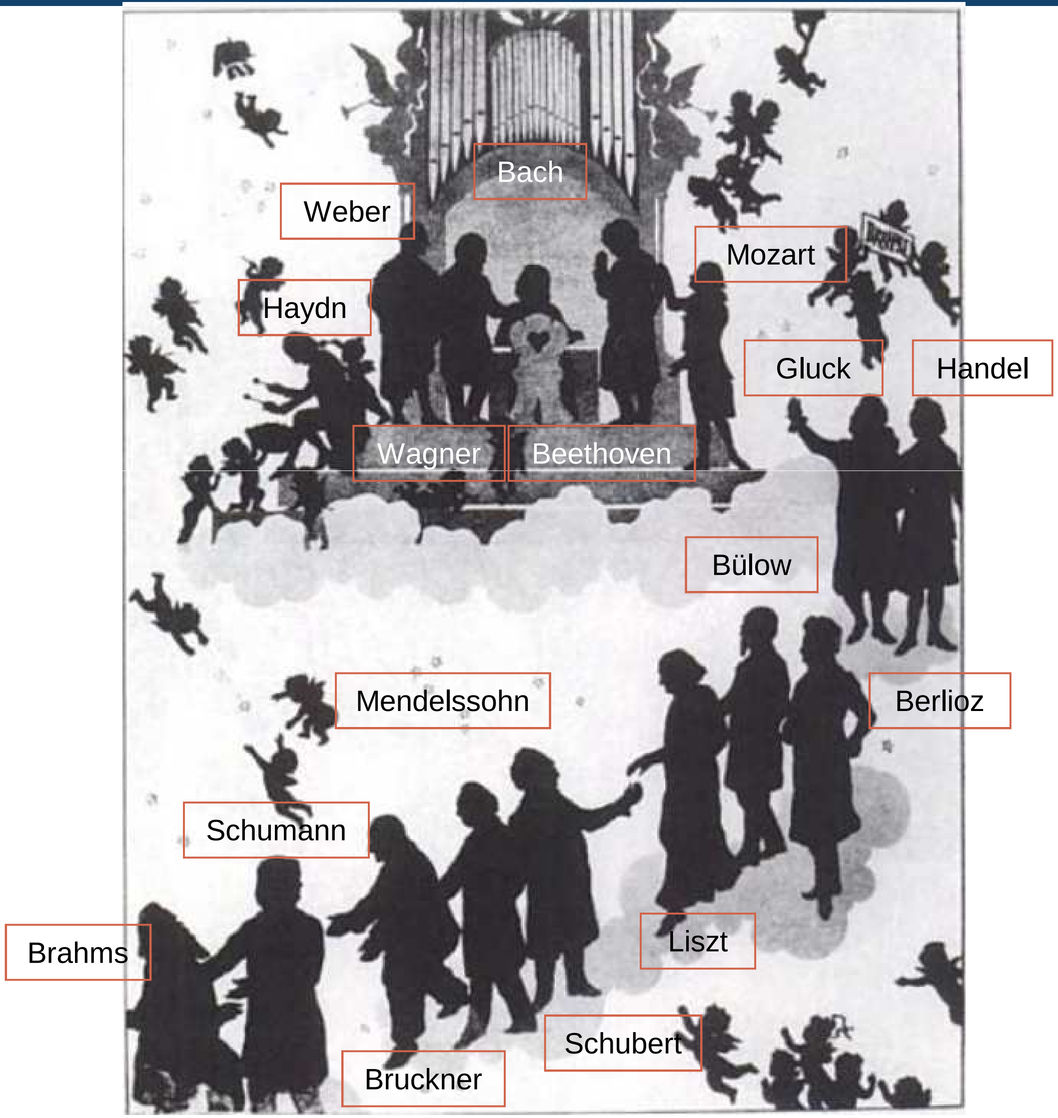
# BRUCKNER IN HEAVEN

Bruckner Wagner Schumann Beethoven Haydn Bach

Liszt Schubert Weber Mozart Gluck Handel

Silhouette drawing by Otto Böhler

# AND BRAHMS TOO, EVENTUALLY!




Silhouette drawing by Otto Böhler

# EXAM LAYOUT (15 JUNE 2011)

There will be five sections on the exam paper (A-E)

› A: Listening (48 marks). Six excerpts, **two of which will not be taken from the set works**. Questions similar to in-class listening tests.
  - Sample questions
  - Identify the work, composer, section of work from which this is taken (**set works only**)
  - What style of writing is being used here?
  - What instrument has the melody, and of what does the accompaniment consist?

› B: Score reading (48 marks). Six excerpts, **two of which will not be taken from the set works**. Detailed questions pertaining to the excerpt; in the case of set works, you may need to draw on broader contextual knowledge as well.
  - Sample questions
  - Identify the work, composer, section of work from which this is taken (**set works only**)
  - What is significant about the chord progression from bars x-y? Name the chord in bar z.
  - How would we best describe the texture of this passage?

# EXAM LAYOUT (15 JUNE 2011)

- C: Definitions (28 marks). Define seven of ten terms. Answers should be both comprehensive and concise
  - Sample: ‘Lieto fine’.
  - Ans: literally ‘happy ending’; the practice in 18th-century opera of ending with some kind of happy resolution, no matter how tragic the plot. The D major sextet at the end of *Don Giovanni* after the title character is carried off to hell is a classical example
- D: General knowledge (32 marks). Answer 16 out of 24 questions. These will test your acquaintance with music and musical practices 1750-1890. Knowledge of the relevant chapters of Burkholder and the lectures will enable you to answer these.
  - Sample: Who reputedly said ‘Any ass can hear that’ when asked about a theme which allegedly resembles one of Beethoven’s? What works were concerned?
  - Ans: Brahms, about the resemblance between a theme in the finale of his first Symphony and Beethoven’s Ode to Joy theme in the Ninth Symphony
- E: Short-answer questions (24 marks). Answer two questions by writing a focussed paragraph response
  - Sample: Describe briefly some of the ways in which Romantic compositions for piano differed from those written in the Classical era